

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Oelrichs School District

Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002

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Dates of On Site Visit: December 12, 2002

Date of Report: December 23, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Needs Improvement The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.

Out of Compliance The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not applicable In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee noted the district has policies and procedures in place to support the implementation of child find. The special education teacher/director and regular education teachers collaborate to provide special services for eligible children. It was also noted that 75% of staff believe that they have received adequate training to implement an IEP.

The committee stated that the district has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place. Families are included in the referral process. Teachers are willing to assist with the implementation of the referral process and use their knowledge and skills to communicate with families.

The steering committee indicated that the district uses data-based decision-making procedures to determine progress. Staff stated that assessment is crucial to driving instruction. Students with disabilities are taking state and district-wide assessment. Student achievement is improving as a result of standards-based goals and objectives.

The steering committee reported that there have been no suspensions and/or expulsions since the 2000-2001 school year. Administrators have been trained to analyze district discipline data for both special education and regular education students.

Finally, the committee reported that the district has a fully licensed staff to work with children with disabilities. Staff has the opportunity to participate in trainings and district staff is receiving training about the use of standards.

The steering committee noted that parents would like to have more involvement with training and programs offered for children with disabilities.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through staff interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team noted that there is a high degree of collaboration between all staff working with students in the Oelrichs School District. Upon the review of student files and interviews with staff, the monitoring team agrees that the district uses databased decision-making procedures to determine progress by collecting data in accordance with the two levels of criteria on the goal and objective page of the IEP. Upon the review of records and interview with special education staff and administration, the monitoring team agrees that no student has been suspended or expelled since the 2000-2001 school year.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees that parents should be included in training and therefore is an area of needs improvement. There was no information to support that parents were ever included in training for their children with disabilities.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:23:02 Psychological evaluator.

The monitoring team noted that James T. Snow signed the psychological evaluations as a clinical psychologist. The team requested a copy of Mr. Snow's certification as a school psychologist and the district did not have the certification in their file. Administrative rule states that the person who signs the psycho educational report must be a certified school psychologist.

ARSD24:05:24:01. Referral.

While completing the self-assessment process, the steering committee determined that the referral process was arranged in an orderly and timely way and that families were pleased with the process. Through interviews with regular education and special education staff as well as administrators it is clear that a referral process exists. During the onsite visit, the monitoring team found that there was no written documentation of a referral in any of 10 student files. Administrative rule states a referral may be submitted verbally, however, this must be documented by the school district.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys
- File reviews
- Attendance records

Meets requirements

The steering committee noted that the school district provides a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities. It was also noted that feedback from parents and students is used to evaluate and make adjustments in programs.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the identified areas of maintenance, the implementation of FAPE and parent involvement in the IEP process.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student files
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported that all evaluations are valid and reliable and the district used an evaluation team to make decisions regarding evaluation, assessment and eligibility. Parents have input into the evaluation process. The committee stated that a team of knowledgeable staff members conducts evaluations. The steering committee reported that the district provides appropriate written notice, obtains consent for assessments prior to the administration of the test. The steering committee reports that the current special education teacher is working on her certification and currently holds an authority to act. Copies of tests administered may be found in student files. Assessments are tailored to assess specific areas of educational concern.

The steering committee stated that staff is learning more about the area of eligibility, a copy of the evaluation report is given to the parent, an individualized education program is written for eligible students.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meets requirements by the steering for appropriate evaluation and that the special education teacher is on an authority to act under the direction of the special education director. The monitoring team was unable to validate the implementation and documentation of the complete special education process from referral to placement.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:04.02 Parent participation/input into the evaluation planning process.

ARSD 24:05:30.04 Prior notice and parent consent

ARSD 24:05:25.04.02 Determination of needed evaluation data

ARSD 24:05:25.04.04 Evaluation procedures

Through file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team determined that the special education staff does not have a clear understanding of the special education process beginning with referral through placement. In 50% of the files reviewed, the monitoring team found no information to support that the team determined evaluation data needed, there was no evidence of parent input into the evaluation process, prior notice and parent consent for initial evaluations and reevaluations were not found or not signed. Not all tests that were administered were listed on the consent and in two files; tests were administered but were not listed. Through staff interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team found the special education staff to be unfamiliar with the functional assessment requirement. District staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process or understand that this information was to be used for determining specific skill areas affected by the student's disability, the student's present levels of performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported that the district transferred rights for three 18-year-old students. It was also noted that parents were informed of this transfer of rights. The steering committee stated that the district ensures that parents have been fully informed of all relevant information pertaining to their child. It was also noted that parents have the opportunity to review the student files and records and those records are maintained for at least five years. The file contains a log for signatures of those who review the file. Parents may inspect and review records relating to educational matters.

The steering committee indicated that the district gives the parent the criteria and appropriate information for accessing an IEE. The IEE can be found in the student file along with written notice and consent.

The steering committee noted that the school district refers to the comprehensive plan for policies and procedures pertaining to the appointment of a surrogate parent for a child with a disability when the parent cannot be located.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meets requirements. Through interview it was noted that the district provides access to records according to their comprehensive plan and each record is confidential and contains a log for viewing the file. Parents inspect and review records relating to educational matters. It was also noted during interview that the district has criteria for independent educational evaluations.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:16.01 Transfer of parental rights addressed, one year prior to reaching age 18.

The monitoring team could not validate that the district provided notice to the student and parents about the upcoming transfer of rights. The monitoring team found three files where the notice of transfer of rights was not within the one-year timeline. Administrative rule requires the parent and student be notified of the transfer of rights at least one year prior to the student's 18th birthday.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported that the district ensures the team includes the required member and takes action to ensure the parent understands the proceedings. It was also noted that general education teachers are responsible for implementing portions of the IEP and are informed of their

responsibilities. The committee stated that parents receive prior notice to the IEP meeting, students are invited to the meeting and meetings are held to design an IEP that meets the needs of the child.

The committee reported that the district used forms which contain the required content.

The committee also noted that the district ensures that the IEP contains transition information and is in effect at the appropriate time, staff assists with the transition process and that the IEP contains the appropriate information pertaining to transition.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meets requirements for individual education program as concluded by the steering committee

Out of compliance

24:05:27:01.01. IEP team.

The monitoring team could not validate appropriate membership at IEP meetings. The regular education teacher did not sign as a team member in 5 files reviewed.

24:05:27:13.02. Transition services.

Transition services are to be a coordinated set of activities, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities. These activities must be based on the individual student's needs and takes into account the student's preferences and interests. Through documentation review, the monitoring team found 3 files where a transition evaluation was not considered or administered in order to design an outcome oriented process bases on the student's needs, preferences and interests. Based on the documentation found, the monitoring team determined this to be an area out of compliance for the district.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan

- SIMS report
- Surveys
- File reviews

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated that students participate in activities with non-disabled peers and staff reported that students with disabilities participate in all school activities. It was also noted that all students receive services in the least restrictive environment with supports need for successful participation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meets requirements for Least Restrictive Environment as concluded by the steering committee.